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COMMENT ON SOVIET ANNOUNCEMENT LIFTING RESTRICTIONS IN AUSTRIA

The Kremlin's reported intention to remove all major obstacles to the free movement of persons and goods into the Soviet zone of Austria is in line with other gestures of the new regime designed to give the appearance of a desire to improve the international atmosphere. It parallels the recent easing in specific cases of travel restrictions both in the USSR and Hungary. Together with the change in the Soviet administrative machinery in Austria, it is probably designed to persuade the Austrians of a new conciliatory Soviet policy and offset the recent Soviet refusal to discuss the Austrian peace treaty.

Actually, the USSR has little to lose by the reported lifting of restrictions in proportion to propaganda gains which it may anticipate. Early in the occupation the Soviet authorities in Austria required approval for Austrian shipment of goods to the West and have held up such shipment intermittently. The Allied Control Agreement of 1946 provided for removal of restrictions on goods and personnel, and representatives of allied powers have been the major group prevented from traveling anywhere in Austria.

While the announcement does not make it clear, presumably restrictions on allied personnel will remain.

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